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ABSTRACT

Students can be motivated to share their reading interests and their writing talents by creating book report mobiles. After students have read a book, they begin their mobile by attaching string to an empty box which has been covered with plain paper. Next, they decorate one side of the mobile with a drawing which illustrates the story or they design a book cover with fancy lettering (for those who "can't draw"). They then write a book report which explains the illustration and why someone else should read the book (the students who have lettered the cover can write about the people, places, or happenings in the book). The book report is then transferred to the other side of the mobile. When they are finished, the book mobiles are hung where other students can enjoy them and, if the students like their peers' recommendations, they will choose to read the books themselves. (DC)

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Book reporting with Book Mobiles

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Books come in all shapes and sizes
and so should book reports! An
attractive dust jacket often entices us
to read a book, so why not encourage
children to make book reports just as
attractive?

Book Mobiles from recycled cereal,
cracker, or cookie boxes motivate
students to share their reading inter-
ests and their writing talents. The
project is fun and most suitable for
pupils in the middle grades. Just
follow these steps.

(1) Pupils read a book of their
choice. Set aside classtime when
everyone reads. Stress the importance
of this time—read along with the
students. They will discover that
reading is more than worksheets,
testing, and drills. They'll soon value
a book's power to take them to
another place or time.

(2) Mobile materials. Having read
their books, students can bring to
school the empty packages they've
been saving. Now they cut string (or
yarn) about 2 yards (or 2 meters) long
and thread it through the top of the
box underneath the opening. They
tape the box top shut, but leave string

hanging out on either side. The string
can be knotted at the top later so that
the Book Mobiles hang at different
levels.

Next, pupils cover the boxes with
plain paper, using a light color since
they will be drawing and writing on
it. They use glue or tape to complete
the job, making sure the string still
hangs out of the sides.

(3) Decorating the mobiles. Now
students use separate sheets of paper
the size of their box to sketch a scene,
event, or character from their book.
This drawing helps them visualize
and interpret what they've read.
Many children reread passages to
make the sketches just right. The
person who complains "I can't draw"
may design a book cover using fancy
lettering, letter templates, or stencils
for the title and author. This alterna-
tive requires a minimal drawing but
lots of coloring later. Doing a rough
copy first reduces mistakes and helps
students plan final drawings or de-
signs for transfer later onto the
boxes.

(4) Writing the report. Drawings
done, the pupils draft one or two
paragraphs explaining their sketches—
they describe the scene, character, or
event. Writing gives the picture life
and becomes the book report.

Children who have lettered a cover

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design can write about the people, places, or happenings in their book. They can summarize the story using the five journalistic Ws: Who or what is the book about? What happens? Why does it happen? When does the story take place? Where does it happen?

Susan, a sixth grader, chose to use the five Ws for her piece on the *Divorce Express* (Paula Danziger, New York, N.Y.: Delacorte, 1982).

Phoebe is 14 and her parents are divorced. During the week she lives with her father and goes to school in Woodstock, New York, and on the weekends she lives with her mother in New York City. This arrangement sometimes interferes with her going on dates. To make matters even worse, Phoebe's mother is getting remarried to Duane who Phoebe can't stand! It seems like everything is falling apart for her until she meets Rosie. Rosie's parents are also divorced. Phoebe and Rosie become best friends. Phoebe meets Dave and things begin to change.

In the final paragraph of the Book Mobile book report, pupils explain why someone else should also read their book. Who would enjoy this type of literature? Why? Recommendations should be truthful and backed with two or more reasons, as Susan demonstrates.

Read *The Divorce Express* by Paula Danziger and find out for yourself the changes in Phoebe's life. You will really identify with the problems this girl has, if your parents, too, are divorced. Even if they're not, you can still share Phoebe's mixed-up feelings and her relationship with her best friend.

(5) Reporting on the mobile. After these paragraphs are revised, edited, and proofread, students transfer their corrected work onto one side of the box. They may put lines on the box so the writing will be straight, or write their reports on composition paper and then paste them onto the package. Knowing that their work will be displayed, students take pride in making the final form neat. They make few errors and easily correct them if pencil or erasable pen has been used.

Finally, the sketch or cover design is penciled onto the other side of the box along with the book title and author's name, and the children color their work.

At last, the Book Mobiles hang in the classroom, hall, or library for others to enjoy. They are so eye-catching, they attract many young readers. Classmates cannot resist reading the reports and then, if they like their peers' recommendations, checking out the books themselves. Isn't that what book reporting is all about?